

files, digitized copyrighted written materials and the like. The entire thrust of the Ginter publication is to create a virtual distribution environment (VDE) which secures, administers and audits the usage of such “electronic content.”

The Ginter system is set up so that users wishing to gain access to “electronic content” can gain the desired access so long as they pay for the right to do so. The VDE provides methods for central control of various user’s access to electronic content, and the VDE allows the owners of the electronic content to ensure that the users have paid or will pay for such access.

Various portions of the Ginter publication refer to an “electronic appliance.” The term electronic appliance as used in the Ginter publication means a computer device which will allow a user to access electronic content. Examples include personal computers, digital music players such as the Apple Ipod and portable devices such as personal digital assistants. The Ginter publication also appears to assert that the term “electronic appliance” would also cover devices such as “smart” credit cards which are capable of interfacing with another electronic device to accomplish the transfer of electronic data. Thus, the term “electronic appliance” as used in the Ginter publication has nothing whatsoever to do with home appliances such as washing machines and dryers.

Claim 1 of the present application is directed to a method of managing use of a rental home appliance. And it is clear from the specification of the present application, that the term “home appliance” refers to items such as clothing washing machines. Claim 1 recites receiving information on use of a rental home appliance through a communications network, calculating a

charge for use of the rental home appliance based on the received use information, and transmitting the calculated charge to a user's terminal through the communication network.

Nothing in claim 1 refers to managing the use of electronic content. Instead, claim 1 is clearly directed to managing the use of a home appliance such as a clothing washing machine, a clothing dryer, or another type of home appliance.

The Office Action refers to various paragraphs of the Ginter publication as allegedly disclosing the features of claim 1. While the words used in the Ginter publication may be similar to the words which appear in claim 1, the meaning of the words in the Ginter publication is completely different from the meaning of the words used in claim 1.

For instance, the Office Action refers to paragraphs 110 and 137-140 as disclosing methods of managing use of a home appliance. Specifically, the Office Action asserts that these paragraphs show receiving information on the use of a rental home appliance through a communication network.

Nothing in paragraphs 110 or 137-140 make any reference to receiving information on the use of a rental home appliance. Paragraph 139 makes reference to monitoring use of an "electronic appliance." However, as described above, in the context of the Ginter publication, the term "electronic appliance" refers to a device which is used to gain access to electronic content such as digital music and video files. Thus, in the context of paragraph 139, all that is occurring is that the system is receiving information about a user's operation of an electronic appliance, such as a computer, to gain access to protected electronic content. Nothing in paragraph 139 refers to use of a home appliance such as a clothing washer.

Likewise, the Office Action refers to paragraph 1515 as showing methods of calculating a charge for use of a rental home appliance. This paragraph is an extremely general description of calculating a charge based on input data. The description appearing in paragraph 1515 would apply equally to buying a doughnut at a convenience store, purchasing software over the Internet, or calculating the cost of a new airplane delivered by the Boeing Corporation. Paragraph 1515 is devoid of any description which would show calculating a charge for use of a home appliance.

The Office Action further references paragraphs 1835 and 1866-1868 as disclosing a method of transmitting a calculated charge to a user's terminal through the communication network. These paragraphs very generally refer to enacting communications between a central VDE and user device to reflect payment for usage of electronic content. Here again, the Ginter publication is making references to charging a user for use of electronic content. Nothing in these paragraphs in Ginter publication has anything whatsoever to do with use of a home appliance.

Because the Ginter publication is completely focused on controlling access to electronic content, such as digital music and video files, it is respectfully submitted that the Ginter reference cannot anticipate the method of claim 1, which recites specific steps directed to calculating charges for use of a rental home appliance. Nothing in the Ginter reference refers to calculating charges for use of a home appliance.

Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that one of ordinary skill in the art viewing the Ginter reference would not find the method of claim 1 to be obvious. The Ginter publication is

wholly focused on electronic content and methods of controlling access and usage of such electronic content. The Ginter publication completely fails to appreciate the inherent difficulties in tracking use of a home appliance, and nothing in the Ginter reference would render these features obvious. In view of all the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is allowable.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and are allowable for at least the reasons discussed above. In addition, the dependent claims recite additional features which are also not anticipated by or obvious in view of the Ginter publication. For instance, claim 3 recites various types of information which would be used to communicate a charge for use of a rental home appliance. None of the features recited in claim 3 are disclosed in or obvious in view of the Ginter publication.

In addition, claim 4 recites that the home appliance is activated by a start signal from a registered subscriber's personal computer or mobile terminal. Here again, the Office Action refers to paragraphs in the Ginter publication which refer to an "electronic appliance." However, as fully described above, the electronic appliance disclosed in the Ginter publication is not a home appliance. Instead, the electronic appliance referenced in the Ginter publication is a personal computing type device which enables a user to access electronic content.

Claims 5-7 recite additional features which are also not shown or suggested by anything in the Ginter publication.

Claim 8 is directed to a method of managing use of a rental home appliance. Claim 8 recites authenticating a subscriber number through a communications network, transmitting a

start signal for a rental home appliance identified by the subscriber number from a server through the communication network to a corresponding subscriber's terminal if the subscriber number is authenticated successfully. Claim 8 further recites receiving use information of the rental home appliance through the communication network, calculating a charge for use of the rental home appliance based on the received use information, and transmitting the calculated charge to the subscriber's terminal through the communication network.

Here again, nothing in the Ginter publication has anything whatsoever to do with enabling the use of a rental home appliance such as a washing machine. Further, nothing in the Ginter publication discloses or suggests anything about receiving use information about a rental home appliance, calculating a charge for use of the rental home appliance, or transmitting a calculated charge to a subscriber terminal. Claims 9-14 depend from claim 8 and recite additional features which are also not shown or suggested in the Ginter publication.

In view of all of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-14 over Ginter is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 15-18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Ginter, in view of Kurodo (U.S. Patent No. 5,757,643). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 15 is also directed to a method of managing use of a washing machine through a communication network. Claim 15 recites receiving information on washing condition program settings based on clothes inserted in the washing machine through the communication network. Claim 15 further recites calculating a charge for use of the washing machine based on the received information, transmitting the calculated charge to the user's terminal through the

communication network, and transmitting the start signal to the washing machine through the communication network if a washing request is received.

Here again, claim 15 is narrowly focused upon managing the use of a washing machine through a communication network. Nothing in the Ginter reference has anything whatsoever to do with managing the use of a home appliance via a communication network. Ginter specifically fails to disclose or suggest receiving information on a washing condition program setting based on clothes inserted in a washing machine. Nothing in the Ginter reference would render such a step obvious.

Furthermore, the Kuroto reference fails to cure any of the deficiencies of Ginter disclosed above. For at least these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that claim 15 is allowable over Ginter and Kuroto. Claims 16-18 are allowable for at least the same reasons.

In view of the foregoing, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 15-18 over Ginter, in view of Kuroto, is respectfully requested.

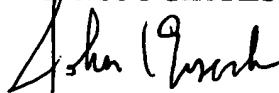
The Office Action asserts that claims 19-29 are directed to the subject matter similar to claims 1-18 and that claims 19-29 are being rejected on the same grounds. It is respectfully submitted that claims 19-29 are also not anticipated by or rendered obvious by either Ginter and/or Kuroto, for all the reasons discussed above. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of these claims is also respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that additional changes would place the application in

better condition, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this, concurrent and future replies, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 16-0607 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
KED & ASSOCIATES, LLP



John C. Eisenhart
Registration No. 38,128

P.O. Box 221200
Chantilly, Virginia 20153-1200
703-766-3701 JCE/krf

Date: February 28, 2007

Please direct all correspondence to Customer Number 34610

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